1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

ETHNOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF AFRICA
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EAST CENTRAL AFRICA

PART I

PEOPLES OF THE LAKE NYASA REGION

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[Title Page]

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1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

I. REGION OF MOZAMBIQUE

YAO, MAKUA-LOMWE, MAKONDE

In the region between Lake Nyasa and the east coast of Africa, between the Lukuledi river in the north and the Zambezi in the south, there is a congeries of peoples whose culture is very similar over the whole area. They are the *Makonde* group, the *Yao* and the *Makua-Lomwe* peoples. Of these only the Yao has been studied in detail. The scanty information about the other inhabitants of the region will be summarized after the fuller summary of the Yao material, so that points of similarity and difference may appear more clearly. Fortunately for this procedure the Yao occupy a central position, from which they may be taken to represent in many ways the culture of the neighbouring peoples.

The *Makonde* inhabit the Makondi plateau between the Lukuledi and Ruvuma rivers (39° and 41° longitude). Closely related to them are the *Mavia*, on the plateau of that name, south of the Ruvuma; the *Mwera*, north of the Lukuledi river, on the Rondo plateau; and the *Matambwe*, in the Ruvuma valley. It is possible that the *Ngindo*, *Ndonde*, and *Ndendeule* should also be included. This group seems to be culturally and linguistically distinct in several points from the Makua and Lomwe, and the Yao, although they have in common the main features of political and social organization.

The region of the *Yao* is between the Ruvuma, Lujenda, and Luchilingo rivers. They also extend into Nyasaland and Tanganyika Territory.

The *Makua* occupy the area between the Lujenda and Lurio rivers and the coastal strip from the mouth of the Lurio nearly to Quilimano.

The *Lomwe* are sometimes regarded as a sub-branch of the Makua, but probably have as much right to be called a separate tribe as the Yao. They are bordered by the Makua on the north, east, and south, and by Maravi on the west. South of them, around Quilimano and east of the Mlanje mountains, are the *Cuabo*,[1] related to the Makua and Lomwe, and also the Podzo, on the south bank of the Zambezi delta.

The region is forested lightly or heavily, and varies in character according to the elevation, soil, and humidity. The coastal belt from Mozambique northwards has thorn-bush vegetation, thick in parts, giving way to light forest and grassland farther inland. In the uplands there is good forest, broad-leaved and evergreen, and deciduous trees near the lake district. Throughout the territory there are narrow strips of richer vegetation along the watercourses, and along the coast mangrove swamps occur at intervals. In the highlands the mornings and evenings are cool and pleasant for eight months of the year, and it is even cold at night in May and August, temperatures of 50° and 60° F. being common in the day. In the hot season the heat is severe, especially in the valley of the Ruvuma. The mean annual rainfall for Mozambique is 39·50 in. and for Likoma on the lake, 39·9 in.[2]

The people are primarily cultivators, but the Yao keep cattle in the highlands. Both Yao and Makua traded with the Arabs and were energetic slave-raiders. The coast Makua and most of the Yao are Islamized.

[1] *c-* pronounced as *ch-*.

[2] *Handbook of Portuguese East Africa*, 1920, pp. 68–77.

[P.1]

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

All these peoples have in common the following points of social organization: matrilineal clans, matrilocal marriage, residence in small villages under independent chiefs or headmen. They have elaborate initiation schools with circumcision for boys, and initiation without an operation for girls. It is mainly by variations in the initiation rites that their cultures can be distinguished from one another. They also distinguish themselves by linguistic variations and by cicatrizations. This is the region of the *pelele*, or lip-ring, although Yao do not wear it.

THE YAO

TRIBAL AND SUB-TRIBAL GROUPINGS AND DEMOGRAPHY

NOMENCLATURE

The name of the tribe is spelt and pronounced in a variety of different ways: Yao, Ayo, Veiao, Hiao, Wahiao, Wahaiao, Wahyao, Ayawa, Myao, Achawa, Wajao, Adjao, Mujoa, Mujanos, Adsawa, Adsoa, Mudsau. Sometimes they are referred to by the name of one of the sections of the tribe or of one of the leaders: e.g. Amachinga, Amangoche, Massaninga (also spelt Amasaninga and Amazaninga), Chiwala, Katule, Kalenje, Mdeule.[1]

GROUPING

The Yao claim a hill called Yao, near Muembe, between the Rivers Lujenda and Luchilingo, as the original centre from which they dispersed. The main body of Yao is in Portuguese East Africa, and there are large settlements in Tanganyika and Nyasaland.

(*a*) *Portuguese East Africa.* The two main divisions of Yao in Portuguese East Africa are around Muembe and around Mtarika, on the Lujenda river.[2] Immediately south of the lower Ruvuma and at its mouth there are two smaller groups. The Yao occupy most of the territory between the Msinje, Luchilingo, and Ruvuma rivers in their upper courses.[3]

(*b*) *Tanganyika.* Yao entered Tanganyika Territory at two separate periods. In the 1850's they immigrated into Masasi, Chiwata, Newala, Tunduru districts and around Mikindani and Kyonga.[4] The other two groups are more recent comers: one (about 3,000), were taken as war-captives by the Ngoni in Songea district; the other (about 45,000), in the upper Lukuledi valley in Lindi district. They came in from Portuguese East Africa about 1912.[5]

(*c*) *Nyasaland.* There are four main groups of Yao:

(i) The largest group lives in the Southern Province, in upper Shire, and south Nyasa districts.

(ii) The second is near Blantyre, Chiradzulu, Zomba.

(iii) A small group is settled in a belt on the west coast of Lake Nyasa at Domira Bay.[6]

[1] Heckel, 1935, p. 7 n.; Hetherwick, 3, 1902, p. xviii; Abdullah, 1919; Burton, 1873, p. 81 n.
[2] *Handbook of Nyasso Co.*, 1898, p. 20.
[3] Johnson, W. P., 3, 1893.
[4] Weule, 1, 1909, p. 140.
[5] *Handbook of German East Africa*, pp. 56, 62.
[6] Murray, 1932, p. 246; Lowe, 1934, p. 37; Hetherwick, 4, 1927, p. 185.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

(iv) Another group is on the south-west side of the lake, north of the Ngoni at Dedza and east of the Ngoni of Ncheu district.[1]

Although these are the main concentrations of Yao, smaller communities are scattered through most of the districts of south Nyasaland.

MAP SHOWING MORE IMPORTANT SITES CONCERNED WITH YAO INFILTRATION

Distribution of Yao shown as a percentage of the population of each district (1931 Census)

Over 50%:	South Nyasa	75%	
	Upper Shire	60%	
30–40%:	Blantyre	38%	
20–30%:	Chiradzulu	26%	
	Zomba	26%	
10–20%:	Dedza	16%	
	Dowa	8%	
	Mlanje	6%	
	Cholo	5%	
1–5%:	Chikwawa	2%	
	Ncheu	1·3%	

History

Nothing is known of the history of the Yao before their settlement at Muembe.[2] Their contact with the Arab traders from the east coast had probably continued for 200 years before the Europeans arrived.[3] When Lacerda wrote in 1798 the Yao were

[1] Codrington, 1898, p. 512.
[2] Stannus, 4, 1922, p. 231; Heckel, 1935, p. 7; Murray, 1932.
[3] Livingstone in 1866 noted the strength of Arab influence.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

even competing with the Arabs for the inland trade.[1] At some uncertain date there were two migratory movements away from the original home of the Yao. The first was a scattering from Hill Yao to surrounding hills, possibly due to internal dissension.[2] The next movement was caused by an attack of the Makua between 1850 and 1870.[3] One party moved northward, finally settling in Tanganyika, as has been mentioned. Four parties moved south into Nyasaland.

(a) *Achisi Yao*, who first moved from Mwembe to Mchisi hill, and then to Nyasaland, where they are represented by those under Katuli Native Authority.

(b) *Amasaninga Yao*, who first moved to Lisaninga hill, near the Lutwisi river, and then to the south-east of Lake Nyasa, where their descendants are now under Makanjira Native Authority.

(c) *Amangoche Yao*, first went to settle at Mangoche, near Fort Johnston. They were later driven out of Mangoche, by the last group, and scattered.

(d) *Amachinga Yao*, first went to the vicinity of Mandimba hill, near the source of the Lujenda river. They were ousted from this fertile valley by the attacks of the Lomwe, and came into Nyasaland in four parties.

One party of Machinga Yao under Nkata (later called Jalasi, or Zarafi) attacked the Yao at Mangoche, drove them south and themselves finally settled there. Another party under Nsamala came with Nkata as far as Mangoche, then turned off to Chiuai hill in the Fort Johnston area. A third group, under Malemia and Mtumanja, moved down to the Domasi valley via Isale hill, where they were attacked by the fourth Machinga group, under Kawinga. The latter had also accompanied Nkata's party as far as Mangoche, then crossed the Shire river to the west; here they were attacked by the Maseko Ngoni under Chidisonga and moved south-east to Chikala, which they occupied until defeated by the British. Liwonde, the brother of Kawinga, moved to the Shire river.

The Amangoche Yao, after they had been scattered by the Amachinga, settled some in the Chitunda part of Dedza district, some at Mount Zomba, some migrated to Ndirande hill near Blantyre, some to Soche hill, some to Chiradzulu, Nguludi, Malawi, and Ndudu hills. These Amangoche Yao constitute about half the Yao population in Nyasaland.[4]

The Yao invasion of Nyasaland was not an organized military expedition, like that of the Ngoni. The first immigrants came peacefully in small kinship groups. They took advantage of Nyanja factions to consolidate their position, until, by 1876, when the Church of Scotland Mission was established at Blantyre, the Yao were a ruling class dominating the earlier inhabitants.[5] At the same time they vigorously carried on their slaving activities. In 1893 Thompson noted that the fertile country of the watershed between the Ruo and the Shire rivers was uninhabited because of Yao raids.[6]

The Yao of Nyasaland suffered from Ngoni raids, but were never subject to them. Several tributes have been paid to their soldierly qualities,[7] and indeed it took five years from 1891, when the Protectorate was declared, before the Yao were subdued and the slave trade, to which they had been principal parties with the Arabs, sup-

[1] Burton, 1873, p. 37.
[2] Abdullah, 1919.
[3] Hockel, 1935, p. 7; Murray, 1932.
[4] Historical notes in unpublished administrative papers.
[5] Du Plessis, 1929, pp. 296 and 304.
[6] Thompson, 1882, p. 99.
[7] Sharpe, 1897, p. 12, and Stigand, 1909.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

pressed. Two contingents of Sikhs were sent unsuccessfully to take Kawinga's fortress in Chikala in 1894; Makanjira was defeated in 1894, Kawinga, Jalasi, Matipwiri, and Tambala in 1896.[1] They were later allowed to return, but they were not recognized as chiefs by the Administration.

The end of tribal wars and of slave-raids made large defensive settlements unnecessary, and the peace saw the splitting up of communities, which rendered the task of the Administration more difficult. The abolition of domestic slavery, by reducing the power of headmen, further contributed to the tendency to live in small scattered settlements. In 1912 the Nyasaland District Administration Ordinance was passed with the object of concentrating the villages into larger communities.

The first movement of Yao from Portuguese East Africa to Masasi took place about the end of the 1850's. According to one account they were originally expelled from the territory between Mataka's and Unangu by the Maseko Ngoni.[2] Then the Makua attacked them, breaking up the tribe still more, so that they migrated north to Masasi, the south-west of the Makonde plateau, and the banks of the lower Ruvuma. At Masasi they were again attacked by Ngoni, but defeated them, and then retired to the Makonde plateau, where they were again attacked by Ngoni. There is a tradition that at some time after 1850 the region was toured by an emissary of the Sultan of Zanzibar, 'Bakiri', who gave the whole country to Matola, a Yao chief, to rule from Newala. In the area between Masasi and the Ruvuma river the Yao are in a majority and politically supreme over their neighbours the Makonde, Makua, Ngindo, Matambwe, and Ndonde.[3] At Mtua, on the Makondi plateau, there is a settlement of Yao who were rescued from the Ngoni on the east shore of Lake Nyasa by Captain Engelhardt, and transferred there. These in outward appearance could hardly be distinguished from the Swahili of the coast.[4]

Demography

The Yao population of Nyasaland has increased steadily but its relation to the total population has not increased:

1921		1931		1945	
Yao population	*Percentage of total population*	*Yao population*	*Percentage of total population*	*Yao population*	*Percentage of total population*
185,363	15·6	246,713	15·4	281,277	13·74

Even in the predominantly Yao areas the population is not homogeneous, either tribally or linguistically. In the three areas in which there are a large number of Yao (Kawinga and Liwonde of Zomba district and Nyambi of Fort Johnston), they represent roughly 48·6, 75, and 73 per cent. of the total population, the next most important section being *Nguru* (Lomwe) immigrants from Portuguese East Africa.[5] Some Nguru call themselves Yao when questioned.

The density in these areas is respectively 65 [illegible], and 52 per square mile.[6] This

[1] Codrington, 1898, p. 320; Maughan, n. 1909, pp. 86, [illegible], 130–3; Scheut, 1893, p. 422.
[2] Livingstone, 1874, p. 70. [3] Wendt, 1900, pp. 108–46.
[4] Ibid. p. 98. [5] Mitchell and Cannon, 1926, 1931, and 1945.
[6] 1945 Census.

1: Taw E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

162. relatively close settlement should be contrasted with conditions 60 years ago, when villages consisted of from 10 to 20 huts, with an average population of 100.[1] The size of villages now ranges from a few huts to 60 or more, with a total average population of about 40 per village, ranging from 15 to 200.

From a sample taken from three groups of hamlets in Liwonde district, it appears that the average gross reproduction rate over the last ten years has been about 2·9, while the net reproduction rate was about 2·2.[2]

Statistics are not available for the Yao population of Portuguese Nyasaland. Livingstone noted that at Mtarika's on the upper Ruvuma (not the town now on the Lujenda but an older one) there was an immense population. Mataka's town had about 1,000 houses, and there were many villages around.[3] The Yao fastnesses at Unangu and Mtonya were also thickly populated.[4] In the barren country south of the Ruvuma, between its confluence with the Lujenda and the beginning of the Makondi plateau, the country was almost uninhabited.[5]

In Tanganyika the Yao are distributed as follows:[6]

District	*Total population*	*Total children*
Tunduru	32,761	13,315
Masasi	15,009	5,048
Kilwa	6,560	1,816
Lindi	6,413	1,574
Mikindani	1,814	583
Songea	7,350	2,879
Dar es Salaam	1,869	230
Rufiji	1,815	189
Tabora	1,909	320
Other districts	3,277	820
	78,299	26,974

Percentage children to adults	*Percentage males to females*		*Increase since*	
	Adult	*Children*	*1928*	*1921*
52	91	113	25,853	34,699

LINGUISTIC DATA

197. The Yao language is spoken over an area extending from near the east coast of Africa to the east shore of Lake Nyasa, and from the sources of the Ruvuma in the north to the Lujenda in the south.[7] There are also two small pockets of Yao who crossed the lake to the west side, who speak their own language.

Duke classifies it as one of the group of Bantu languages in the East Central Zone, which constitutes a bridge between the languages of the East and Central Zones. He

[1] Macdonald, 1882, p. 144.
[2] 1874, pp. 68, 72.
[3] Thompson, 1882.
[4] *Census of Native Population*, 1931, Table VI. There are also 4,831 people at Kilwa called Machinga, whose name indicates that they are probably of Yao origin.
[5] Hetherwick, J., 1902, p. 208.
[6] Mitchell, 4.
[7] Maples, C. J., 1895.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

places it in the same group of languages as Makua, Nkonde, and Tumbuka, but not with Makonde. He counts Nginda as a dialect of Yao.[1] Guthrie places it in the Makonde group, but not in the Makua-Lomwe group.[2] 197

The Yao language shows very little dialectical variation, which is attributed to the age-long Yao love of travel. Such differences as occur are found chiefly in accent or idiom, not in grammatical structure. There are five different divisions corresponding to the different branches of the tribe: (*a*) *Amakale*, near the sources of the Ruvuma; (*b*) *Mwembe*, near Mataka's, south of the Ruvuma; (*c*) *Mwaniqua*, near the south end of Lake Nyasa; (*d*) *Mangoche*, near Blantyre; (*e*) *Machinga*, on Mounts Chikala and Zomba.[3]

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The Yao boundary on the west, where they mix with Nyanja peoples of the east lake shore, is a line of hills about 1,500 ft. above the lake level, extending south to Mangoche. Starting north-east from the fertile valley of the Mandimba, there is a fairly level plain, watered by other tributaries of the Lujenda, as far as Mataka's and Mtarika. On the east side of the Luchilingo river there is a fairly continuous line of mountain fastnesses and hills, and from the source of the Mainje to its confluence with the Ruvuma, there are lines of fortresses to the east and west, traversed by steep mountain tracks. From the Mainje source to the Ruvuma the country is cut by deep streams and crowned by mountains 2,000 to 5,000 ft. high.[4] On the south bank of the Ruvuma, below the confluence with the Lujenda, the country is a semi-desert, with barren stony soil, little water, and plentiful game. The Yao also inhabit the western edge of the Makondi plateau, where the valley of the Ruvuma widens into a great plain. Here the sandstone of the Makondi plateau is denuded and the soil is barren and stony. The Makondi bush gives way to thin open forest of mimosa and other trees.[5] Most of the Yao country in the east of Portuguese East Africa is tsetse infested, but in the interior, approaching the east shore of Lake Nyasa, it is capable of supporting fine herds.[6] 133 (131)

South Nyasa district is mountainous in the east; the plain in the west stretches into Dedza and Ncheu districts. Owing to scarcity of water in the dry season this plain is thinly populated. The soil of the plain is sandy, except on the shore of the lake and the river bank, where it is rich alluvial soil; in the hilly parts the soil is clayish. During the last few years the lake level has risen and on the lake shore and the banks of the Shire river water is plentiful throughout the year. Smaller rivers have enough water all the year round to supply villages. The average annual rainfall at Fort Johnston is 33 in. for the last six rainy seasons, but the general average is 28 in. The average mean temperature is 75° F. The climate in the plains and at Fort Johnston is hot and trying in the hot season, but cooler on the hills. The greater part of upper Shire district is below 2,000 ft. in altitude and hot and unhealthy. In the dry weather most rivers are 132

[1] 1925, p. 65.
[2] 1948, p. 62. Naturally most of the earlier information support Duke's classification, since they are mainly the sources on which it was based (Hetherwick, *op. cit.*, Meredith Sanderson, 1922, p. xii). Affinity with the language of the Gulf of Guinea has been claimed for Yao by Dr. Albert Drexel, of Innsbruck, quoted by Heckel, 1925, p. 7.
[3] Hetherwick, 3, 1901, pp. xix–xxi; 1, 1893, p. 64.
[4] Thompson, 1882, pp. 67–78.
[5] Johnston, 3, 1893.
[6] Hamilton, 1923, p. 12.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

completely exhausted or reduced to a mere trickle. The average annual rainfall over the last ten years is 29·73 in. The shore waters of Lake Pamalombe are well stocked with fish. Both districts are well wooded, with a large variety of timber trees. In the dry sandy soil where the population is unable to live for lack of water, the prevalent type is *mwnye*. A few [illegible] othills from Zomba to Chikala are conserved as Forest Reserves.[1]

MAIN FEATURES OF ECONOMY[2]

The Yao are chiefly agriculturists, and in the old days were also hunters. As they live largely in tsetse-infested areas, they do not keep cattle, except for a few herds near Fort Johnston and Zomba, in Nyasaland, and on the east of Lake Nyasa,[3] in the mountains of the Rovuma valley around Matola's.[4]

Abdallah describes a time when the Yao were economically self-sufficient, making their own bark-cloth, weaving, burning herbs for salt, and working iron for the tools they needed. Nevertheless, the tradition of eastward journeys for trading with the Arabs was well developed before the Europeans came to the country. They used to trade cattle and salt from the Manganja and Lomwe for tobacco and hoes, and in exchange for slaves they got from the Arabs gunpowder, guns, swords, beads, coloured cloths, earthenware, and foodstuffs.[5] Slaving expeditions were among the most important activities of the chiefs.[6] The old tradition of the absence of the men from the village owing to these expeditions, is continued in modern times by soldiers and labour migrants to Southern Rhodesia and the Union. These men send back remittances to the area, but the main population is supported by agriculture. Cash is needed for purchasing salt and cloth, for paying certain dues and fines formerly paid in kind—adultery compensation, diviner's and initiation fees—as well as for tax and rent. Consequently, while certain crops, such as tobacco and ground-nuts, are grown for cash, any food crop is liable to be sold in one form or another in local markets or by the roadside.

The food crops are maize, sorghum, finger millet, sweet potatoes, ground-nuts, legumes. Fish is an important article of diet. Eggs are believed to cause sterility and are only eaten by those outside the child-propagating age; milk is disliked and never consumed.[7] *Termite alates* (flying nuts) are a much relished food when they come out on nuptial flights. Rice is considered a superior food, and is eaten when possible on ritual occasions.[8]

Tobacco is the main cash crop, with individual production under the supervision of the Agricultural Department. The average cash earned per grower in 1943–4 was £3. 3*s*. This is overwhelmingly an external trade. Ground-nuts, which are sold at government-controlled markets to licensed buyers, bring in only a few shillings a year to the average seller. Women obtain cash by selling beer. At the lake shore the fishing industry is very important. Natives owning big nets are said to make between £20

[1] Murray, 1932, pp. 147–62.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, the information is from J. C. Mitchell, and relates to the Yao of south Nyasaland.

[3] Livingstone, 1874, pp. 32 and 80. [7] Young, E., 1877, p. 100.

[4] See Livingstone, 1874, p. 68; Young, E., 1877, p. 130; Thompson, 1880, p. 36; Scheut, 1893, p. 422; Maughan, c. 1900, pp. 86–7; Lewis, 1924, pp. 32–3. [5] Abdallah, 1919, pp. 10–11, 28–30.

[6] Stannus, c. 1910, p. 30. [8] Scheut, 1934, p. 19.

1: Yao K-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

and £30 per annum. It is profitable to carry fresh fish inland by bicycle even as far as Blantyre,[1] as the shore price to the retailer is 4*d.* a load, which later may fetch from 18*d.* to 24*d.*[2] Two on the south-west lake shore grow an excellent quality rice.[3] Rice is also grown near Lake Chilwa, but is mainly sold in the market organized near the lake shore by the Agricultural Department.

Division of Labour

The men build the house, hoers, fales, make the nets, baskets, grain-store, game-traps, and, in the old days, the bark-cloth. He cultivates the tobacco. He cuts down the trees and may help with the hoeing and harvesting. The woman hoes, coats the floor of the hut, sweeps, cooks, brings firewood, draws water, brews beer, makes the pots and pipes.[4]

Land Usage

There are two types of garden in the Yao areas south of Lake Nyasa: one the ordinary garden in which the staples grow, and second, gardens along the stream beds. These latter are especially valuable for providing out-of-season crops. In addition most householders have a few small plots for tobacco and ground-nuts.

The main garden is cultivated by the slash-and-burn method, common in Central Africa. The Yao, unlike the Bemba, garden occupies the whole area cleared. Burning is done just before the rainy season (October–November). The ash and soil are hoed into elongated mounds and grain is planted along the ridges. Gardens may be cultivated for more than five years. In the second and subsequent years of cultivation the stalks and weeds are piled up and burnt. There are signs of soil impoverishment. The gardens are cleared in August, and heaped to dry for burning. After the burning the seeds are planted in late November. By February and March green maize is available to supplement the diet, and by the end of April the crops are ready to be harvested. The maize is stored in wicker containers, while sorghum is stored in the huts on a stand. Cassava is planted in large mounds made by turning the turfs over, so that the roots are outside the mound and the vegetable matter inside. Legumes are planted in smaller gardens, or interplanted with the main crop. Ground-nuts are stored, after being shelled, in mud-plastered wicker containers, designed to be rat-proof. Tobacco is planted at the sides of the streams for hand-watering in the seedling stage, and then transplanted about January. The leaves are ready to be plucked about April and soon afterwards they are marketed. Sweet potatoes are planted in the rainy season, and are ready for eating in May. The stream gardens yield out-of-season crops—maize, beans, pumpkins, and also sugar-cane, which is used in the initiation ceremonies.

Craftsmanship

The Yao have few skills. All cultivation is by hoe; axes and knives are their only other technological equipment. The men make mats from reeds and palm leaf, and the women make pottery. The huts are strongly built from palm laced with bamboo and plastered with mud. The roof is thatched with grass. Under Arab influence the

[1] *Census of Native Population*, 1931, p. 16.
[2] Cunningham, 1898, p. 313.
[3] Swynnerton, n.d. 1910, p. 136; Monteiro-Mesquita, 1880, vol. I, p. 130.
[4] Ayliff, 1931, p. 19.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

Yao make square houses.[1] Panelled doors and glass windows, deck-chairs and palm furniture are becoming more and more popular. The men wear long Moslem robes and the women are clothed in cotton. In the rural areas there are usually a few craftsmen who still ply their trades as carpenters and blacksmiths, though the latter no longer smelt, but use scrap-iron.

Labour Migration

Statistics are not available for the Yao of Portuguese East Africa or Tanganyika Territory. Yao constitute 34 per cent. of the total population of South Nyasa district, 15 per cent. of upper Shire, 11 per cent. of Blantyre and Zomba.[2] The proportion of labour migrants in these districts was in 1937 as follows:[3]

District	Adult males fit to work	Percentage of emigrants	Number producing economic crops	Number of subsistence producers	Emigrants not heard of since 1930
South Nyasa	24,230	87·1	2,911 (12%)	19,005 (79%)	873
Upper Shire	24,873	12·9	2,233 (10%)	18,609 (87%)	255
Blantyre	55,330	13·6	3,788 (13%)	19,165 (40%)	986
Zomba	26,879	10·4	3,700 (19%)	9,490 (33%)	333

South Nyasa district, which is underlain watertight basalt with a long history of famine and food shortage, has the highest proportion of labour migrants. Upper Shire, though not fertile, is more prosperous, benefiting from the tobacco- and cotton-growing industries, and from the dried-fish trade.[4]

SOCIAL ORGANISATION AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE[5]

Kinship and Local Grouping

Among the Yao succession is matrilineal and marriage mainly matrilocal. According to some informants succession formerly passed down the line of brothers, as with the Bemba, but it now passes direct to the eldest sister's eldest son, or to descendants of other sisters in order of seniority.[6] Chiefly succession follows the same rule, but the most senior may be set aside for a more suitable candidate.[7]

Clan names, *dzinyao*, are inherited matrilineally, and formerly designated exogamous units,[8] but the marriage prohibition has now ceased to operate. Holders of the same clan name are unable to trace descent from a common ancestress, and for commoners clan names seem to have quite lost their significance; they are, however, carefully remembered in the chiefly lines and in other lines of hereditary rank, such as village headmen.

Within the general kinship grouping of the clan, a smaller group is recognized,

[1] Weaver, 1908, p. 121; Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. xv-x, describes a round hut.

[2] 1931 Census information is taken because the district boundaries were changed between 1931 and 1945, so that the information in the 1945 Census would not be susceptible of comparison with that given in the 1937 Survey of Male Adult Population in the *Ball Report*, Appendix A.

[3] *Ball Report*, 1938, Appendix A. [4] Smith, 1937.

[5] Information, unless otherwise stated, is from Mitchell, and relates to south Nyasaland Yao.

[6] Johnston, 1897, p. 471; Meredith Sanderson, 1900, p. 370. Cf. Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 183, who says that brothers inherit before sister's son.

[7] Ibid., p. 182. [8] Swanson, n. 1901, p. 256.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

Ilolo (plur. *matolo*), a breast. This includes all who are supposed to be descended from a common ancestress. Often the direct line of descent from the founding ancestress is not known for more than three or four generations. The small groups which can definitely claim to be 'of one breast' constitute the distinct matrilineal groups which live together in separate hamlets within a village. Each is undifferentiated in relation to other matrilineal groups, but internally each is differentiated on the principle of sibling unity.

The main emphasis of the kinship system is on the bond between a man and his sisters. Their relationship is summed up in the word *nduumbo* (translated by Mitchell as 'sorority group'). A man speaking of his *nduumbo* refers to all the women he calls sister, their daughters, and their daughters' daughters. Strictly speaking, female kin in the ascending generations are excluded, as belonging to the *nduumbo* of his mother's brother. The 'warden' of a sorority group, *eryene nduumbo*, is the senior of the brothers and is responsible for the behaviour of the women in his charge; he appears for them in court and pays fines on their account. He plays an important part in the marriage negotiations. It is his duty to consult the diviner if his sister or her child falls ill, and to be chief mourner at the funeral of either of them, also providing medicine for the ritual purification at the end of the mourning period. Formerly these obligations were balanced by certain rights. He could sell some of them into slavery for his own personal reasons. This privilege is ended, but even to-day it is through his sorority group that a man achieves status and independence.

The principle of sibling unity is expressed in many other ways. A man and his sister reciprocally call each other *alumbuanga*. More usually, a woman calls her brother, older or younger than herself, *asinwene* (a term of respect usually applied to a chief), for any brother may be regarded as warden of her sorority group. A man has the same duties to his younger brothers as to his sisters, so they also call him *asinwene*, but he calls them *mpuanga* 'younger brother', as they can never be in the position of warden in relation to him. Maternal uncles are called *akuulowa*, and a sister's son *ciputa*.

Within each matrilineal descent group, differentiation takes place between members according to whether they are siblings or not. A man's sorority group included ideally his own siblings and their female matrilineal descendants. His sister's daughters are also the sorority group of his sister's son, their brother, so that any woman can belong at any one moment to the sorority groups of her brother, her mother's brother, her mother's mother's brother, &c., but the effective one is that of her own brother, if adult. He is consulted first in small disputes, and at the marriage ceremony each party is represented by a brother as well as by a mother's brother. In the break-up of a hamlet (described below, p. 12), siblings tend to hold together more closely than cousins and to form groups of their own, so that each woman in the descent line is a potential point of cleavage. Tension between brothers as they compete for control of the sorority group is a source of friction within the sibling group which eventually leads to its disruption.

Since marriage is mainly matrilocal, and extra-village, the husband in his wife's village is seen as a stranger by all the members of her matrilineal descent group. There is a tendency for members of such descent groups to live together in a cluster of huts. The word 'hamlet' is used by Mitchell to indicate a cluster of huts, in which

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

every adult member is a matrilineal descendant of a single ancestress, or a spouse of one of these people. All husbands are called *akwe* by the male members of the descent group, but husbands call each other by the kinship terms for elder and younger brother (i.e. *mkwanzi* or *mpwanga*) according to the seniority of their wives. Similarly multilineational in kinship terms are the wives of all men of the descent group, who call each other '*mtewe*'.

The husband is expected to work in his wife's garden, to help his mother-in-law, and also, in the early stages of marriage, to avoid her. His attitude to his father-in-law is one of respect, relaxing as time goes on. His attitude to his wife's brother is also one of respect, which covers feelings of latent hostility. Although husband and wife's brother co-operate in affairs relating to the woman and her children (e.g. they jointly consult the diviner in case of illness, and the brother-in-law hears grievances the husband may have against his wife), there are elements of conflict arising from their competition for the affection of the woman and her children.

Patrilocal marriages are the rule in certain cases. The village headman commonly has his wife in his own village. At his death his widow may return to her own village, but if her daughters have married locally she may stay, and one of her sons, as warden of his sisters, will also stay and marry patrilocally, as did his father, the headman. Thus a new matrilineal descent group, linked to that of the headman by a patrilineal link, develops. In every generation the number of separate but related matrilineal descent groups would double, and at such a rate of proliferation it might be expected that any village would contain many family groups. In fact, however, most members of a village can trace their descent from a common ancestress removed not more than about five generations. There are two reasons for this degree of homogeneity in the kin-grouping in the villages. One is that the villages tend to split up as they become too large and complex. The other is that the introduction of a new matrilineal descent group is often avoided by a cross-cousin marriage by the headman of the village or the warden of a seniority group.

There is a joking-relationship between cross-cousins, that is, for example, between the village headman's children and his sisters' children. The latter, as members of his descent group, have interests and loyalties opposed to those of his own children. Although there is a strong tradition of cross-cousin marriage, such marriages are said to be likely to be unstable.

Betrothal and Marriage

Child betrothal was common among the Yao. Acceptance of a loin-cloth and the wearing of it was taken of betrothal, giving the groom exclusive rights over the girl.[1] The negotiations for an adult marriage are conducted by senior matrilineal kinsmen of the parties, who at the subsequent ceremony act as witnesses or sureties to the marriage. Usually the senior is the mother's brother, and the junior the brother. The act of validation, the *Chiputwe* rite, takes place some time after the husband and wife have been living together. They meet in the hut of the woman for the rite, which *sometimes includes a cooling-down period*, postponed by the female relatives of each party. The man's people bring a cockerel and the woman's a hen for relish. The exchange of food symbolizes the exchange of members of each matrilineal kin group, which is

[1] Macdonald, *Africa*, vol. i, p. 118; Johnston, *Chin*, pp. 411–13.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT? Yao FT?

appeased also in the question by the marriage mention. The couple are exhorted to 585
refer disputes to the mention, and to consult the diviner in case of sickness.[1] After the
rite these two mention have special responsibilities towards the couple; grievances
are referred to them; and they must be present when adultery cases are heard in
court. If the marriage witness ceremony has not been performed, the relationship is
not regarded as legal and no adultery compensation can be claimed by the husband.

Divorce used to be a private affair, which was merely signalled by one party giving 586
to the other an arrow as a token of separation.[2] Nowadays all divorce cases go to court.
The woman is usually asked to choose between her husband and the adulterer, and
the compensation paid to the former, if she decides to leave him, is higher—amount-
ing to about 10s. A man can be sent away from the village by his wife's kin, but if he
has given no grounds for divorce he can claim compensation and will also take back [478]
any gifts made to his wife. A few small gifts to his mother-in-law are not reclaimed.
Divorces are easily obtained and frequent. Grounds for the divorce of a man may
include failure to pay hut tax, one of the specific duties of the husband.

The custom of making a marriage payment is recorded by Johnston[3] (on the east 583
coast of Lake Nyasa) as a relatively new adoption. When given it is divided between 197
the bride's father, mother, and mother's brother and brother.[4]

Slavery

Domestic slavery was an important institution in the Yao social system. Slaves were 567
obtained by capture, purchase, or in compensation for injury.[5] A man would pay a
debt by giving slaves (wives or members of his matrilineal kin group) to his creditors.[6]
A man might voluntarily enslave himself to a man having charge of many women, as
a means of obtaining a wife.[7] The children of a free man and a slave woman were not
emancipated, as their father could not take them from the village of their mother's
master, who had the right to sell them.[8] Slaves took part in the ordinary life of the
village; women slaves ranked as junior wives of their masters and shared the usual
work of women. Men might be supplied with guns for hunting or might accompany
their masters to war, trade for them, spin, weave, sew, make baskets.[9] The institution [569]
of domestic slavery was an expression of a dominant motif in Yao culture—the associa-
tion of status with a large number of dependants. Its abolition by the British was in
itself a major blow to the prestige and authority of the chiefs.

Information about the social organization of the Yao in Portuguese East Africa is 184
scanty, but it is in agreement with what is known of the Nyasaland Yao; Henkel, who 602
knew the Yao in Lindi district, Tanganyika Territory, confirms the correctness of
Johnston's account of the South Nyasa Yao.

The Yao came into Nyasaland in small parties of kinsmen. Their experience and 775
their superior weapons soon enabled them to dominate the Nyanja among whom they
settled, and today they dominate the population of the Southern Province. They are [Cad?]
organized into loose groups of villages, under petty, independent chiefs. They seem [31]

[1] Rowena, a. 1900, p. 140; Hynde, 1899; Johnston, J. 1900, pp. 69-73; Macdonald, 1882, vol. 2,
Warren, 1908, pp. 109-30.
[2] 1900, pp. 70-3.
[3] Rowena, a. 1900, p. 180.
[4] Rowena, a. 1900, p. 180.
[5] Warren, 1908, pp. 107-9; Rowena, a. 1900, p. 177.
[6] Rowena, 1900, p. 120 (see a valuable account).
[7] Macdonald, 1882, vol. 1, pp. 188-9.
[8] Warren, 1908, p. 103.
[9] Ibid.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Tao FT7

never to have had any large-scale central political organization, and their history is full of occasions when one group of Tao has attacked another. Even within his own area the authority of the chief was not, apparently, sufficiently strong to prevent one village headman from raiding his neighbours; the chief maintained no standing army.[1] The chief held certain rights and privileges. He was entitled to the ground tusk of any elephant found in his territory (the finder was rewarded after it had been sold, with a cloth); he received tribute in food,[2] with which he entertained visitors. He took a share of the spoils of war and was also entitled to annual labour service and to a gift when he made a new burial place. Apart from his military and judicial responsibilities, he had authority to settle when and where initiation ceremonies should be held.[3] The right to hold these ceremonies was sought after by the village headmen as a mark of honour.[4] The chiefs or headmen of certain families had the right to wear a white cloth bound round their temples as insignia of rank.[5]

In addition the chief had a certain ritual status. He was thought to incur mystical danger by contact with death, and so was not allowed to attend a funeral nor to eat a chicken brought by a messenger announcing a death, nor to accompany his military expeditions. He was supposed to have great power through special medicines. He had to make offerings to the ancestors, especially in affairs concerning the whole people, such as drought or epidemic. He was expected to give a burial cloth at the death of an important man. At his death a period of social disorganization was recognized, members of his village were allowed to pillage and rape, until he was buried.

Succession to the chiefly office was matrilineal. The chief's position was based partly on his status as the senior male of his own matrilineal kin group, partly on his wealth. His command over slaves, guns, and currency to the coast was greater than that of others, and from these his military strength was derived, for a chief was powerless without his following of dependants. The chief of the area was also headman of his own village. In fact, the position and duties of a village headman (except that he could not exact tribute)[6] reproduced in small scale those of the chief. The headmen also were in mystical danger through contact with death and were the channel through which the ancestors were approached in affairs concerning the village. They, too, built up their prestige and wealth by slaving activities. They seem to have been largely independent of the chief, carrying on slave raids of their own, and if they could gain a sufficient following, they might break away from the chief, and set up their own chiefdoms.[7]

The chief ruled through a hierarchy of headmen. His councillors were superior headmen, placed over a number of village headmen. Commoners could approach the chief only through the councillor in whose area their village belonged. The councillor's special duties were to report daily to the chief on the affairs of his district, to advise, and to arbitrate in the chief's own domestic affairs, e.g. in conflicts between the chief and his brothers and nephews. The councillors were not necessarily relatives of the chief,[8] but were chosen for accession of their general status in the community, and their

[1] Elmslie, a, 1899, p. 109, says of the Tao in the Shire highlands: 'Every tenth man was over ninety he set down as a chief . . . petty quarrels of petty chiefs were abundant . . .' See Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. 189 and 190.
[2] Hetherwick, a, 1902, says that only beer was stored in huts.
[3] Duff, n. 1950.
[4] Duff, 1950, p. 310.
[5] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 18; Weeks, 1908, p. 180.
[6] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 133.
[7] Ibid., pp. 30 and 138.
[8] Ibid., p. 138.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao F37

office tended to become hereditary. Each councillor had his own village which he administered as a headman. A second set of officials were the court assessors, *mapanga*, who, unlike the councillors, were not in charge of villages of their own in addition to their court duties. Their office was not hereditary and they were chosen for their wisdom and their debating ability. They lived at the court of the *chief* and their main duty was to sift the evidence in the judicial cases which came before him.

The village headmen were expected to send elephant tusks to the *chief* (receiving small gifts in return), and to invite him to a yearly beer drink. Like the *chief*, the village headman governed through a council of the most important men in his village. They constituted a kind of village court over which he presided, and in the old days he could give capital sentences, or award a fine of as many as four slaves. Appeal from his decision lay to the court of the superior headman, or to the *chief*. Important cases would be reported direct to the *chief*. Most crimes would be settled by compensation. In cases of murder, several slaves were paid to the kin of the victim, and a fine for spilling blood to the *chief*. When compensation was handed over, the recipient always returned some part of it as sign that friendship was restored.[1]

Macdonald's further account of the treatment of crime shows how weak was the political organization, in spite of the apparent orderliness of the system of inferior and superior courts. A murderer caught red-handed might be killed at once. If captured alive he might be ransomed on payment of a fine of from four to twenty slaves, some of whom might be killed to accompany the dead. If the murderer escaped a relative of his would be captured and ransomed. This applied to murders occurring among parties friendly to one another and living in the same village. If the murderer was from another village, the injured village, if strong enough, would fall upon the other and kill and enslave the inhabitants. If not strong enough, the chief might be called in to help to annihilate the guilty village.[2]

Modern Administration

In the whole of Nyasaland there must be between thirty and forty Yao chiefs. In the districts of Liwonde, Fort Johnston, and Zomba, where 60 per cent. of the Yao population is concentrated (1931 boundaries), there are at least fifteen such chiefs. Not all those who have the rank of *chief* in the old Yao system are recognized as Native Authorities or even as Sub-Native Authorities by the Nyasaland Administration, and many Sub-Native Authorities would be full chiefs in the Yao system, and quite independent of the Native Authorities under whom they are placed.

Nowadays the *chief* has lost many of his former claims to status. He no longer has monopoly of the trade to the coast, for goods are brought in by Indian traders and bought by African tobacco growers or returned labour migrants. He can no longer use his slaves to increase his wealth by raiding slaving expeditions. His tribute of food and ivory has ceased, and he can no longer entertain lavishly, but he is still expected to give burial cloths and to make gifts to headmen on their succession to office. Some of his councillors have been made court assessors, and are paid for those duties, but others are expected to work for him unpaid. Some chiefs do reward councillors who retain their traditional status but are not officially recognized as assessors by the

[1] Macdonald, *Africa*, vol. i, pp. 236-8; Freeman, *o. cit.*, p. 279.
[2] Macdonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-41.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

Administration, but many cannot afford to do this. The people regard the taxes they pay to the Administration as a substitute for the chief's tribute. As the Native Authority the chief appears to be responsible for tax-collection, as the tax-clerk lives at the court.

The chief is responsible to the Administration, among other things, for latrine construction and for punishing the infringement of various regulations. His main duties are judicial, as judge of the Native Authority Court. The bureaucracy attached to the Native Authority includes a number of functionaries, e.g. Kawinga's, in 1947 one of the larger courts, had 1 court clerk, 1 assistant court clerk, 1 community worker, 1 forest guard, 1 agricultural demonstrator, 1 sanitary inspector, 9 court messengers, 2 caretakers, 4 gaoler men, 1 market clerk, 1 market sweeper, 6 court assessors. These are paid by the Native Treasury. Court assessors help in the arbitration of cases. The key position at court is held by the court clerk, and usually he is not a Yao, but an Nguru, who, because he is literate, is the medium of all written communications to and from the chief. The court sergeant is the correct channel of approach to the chief, and the court messengers represent the chief to the villages.

The territory of a Native Authority is divided into 'administrative villages', under officially recognized and paid headmen. Within these areas there are clusters of huts, which do not form officially recognized administrative units, but which are none the less villages under their own hereditary headmen. The administrative village headman is responsible for the payment of taxes in his area, and for the observance of various regulations. He is usually a man with some standing in the Yao social system: one who has the right to conduct a boys' initiation ceremony, or to wear the head-band signifying rank. His authority is derived partly from his status as a senior kinsman, partly from his status as a village headman. If the administrative village under him includes a number of hamlets unrelated to the administrative village headman, he will delegate his responsibilities in these hamlets to their own headmen. Consequently, since village headmen perform administrative duties, whether they are officially recognized or not, there is competition among them for the official posts. In order to bring pressure to bear on the chief to make him concede marks of rank, they may threaten to move out of his area, and so to deplete his following. In spite of this bargaining tool, the position of the village headman *vis-à-vis* the chief is said to be getting progressively weaker. Cases once tried by them are now being taken to the chief's court, and the latter is able to draw on the power of the Administration to establish his dominance over the headmen.

The chief in the modern system stands as the representative of the people to the white Administration, and as the representative of the white Administration to the people. One reason for the lack of direct contact between the Administration and the people is the fact that Yao is not the official language of the district, and therefore Yao interpreters are necessary.

There are some occasions when the chief and his officials perform the functions proper to their office under the old social system. The white Administration is not concerned with their ritual functions, nor with initiation rites, nor does it take cognizance of witchcraft offences. Accusations of witchcraft are judged by the same personnel as accusations of theft or adultery, but they are not dealt with in the court house, nor recorded in the book.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

Land Tenure

The rules governing land tenure were those which would be expected of a society which suffered from no land shortage. A man was entitled to as much land as he could cultivate, the limitation being that he should consult the headman as to his neighbours' boundaries. Abandoned gardens could only be taken up with the permission of the original cultivator.[1]

MAIN CULTURAL FEATURES

Religion

The Yao are largely Islamised. Codrington remarked that the perpetuation of this faith was distinctly antagonistic to British influence, and it received considerable attention from chiefs and headmen. Schools for the instruction of youth in reading and writing Swahili in Arabic characters were established in nearly every village, where also prayers were made at regular intervals in the day. The Moslem fasts and feasts were also observed, and the Yao were not inclined to embrace Christianity.[2] Their conversion to Islam did not take place till the nineteenth century, long after their first introduction to the Arab traders at Kilwa and Zanzibar, although they had adopted Swahili modes of dress much earlier.[3]

According to Hetherwick, Islam is strongest on the lake shore and on the east border of Nyasaland, chiefly round the old slave-trade centres. Makanjira's on the south-east side of the lake, and Domira Bay on the west, were the centres of Moslem propaganda. The Moslem population around Zomba and Blantyre consists mainly of Yao men, who have built themselves mosques in their own villages, or use the large mosques of Indian Moslem merchants. In the west districts, lower Shire, Ruo, central Shire, Liwonguwe, Fort Manning, the Moslem population does not total more than 732. In the districts round Fort Johnston and Kotakota, the Moslems are one-ninth of the total population, while in Zomba district they number one-fifth.[4]

The Yao pagan religion was a form of ancestor worship. Apart from diviners and medicine men, there was no regular priestly profession. Intercession with the ancestors was performed by the chief, on behalf of the chiefdom, by the headman on behalf of the village, and by the head of the matrilineal kin for his dependents.[5] A man was qualified to approach his ancestors individually only if he had been initiated and had a house of his own.[6]

Some of the ritual duties of the chief have already been mentioned. When his people were visited by drought or epidemic, or when he fixed the day for the beginning of the millet harvest, he made an offering of flour and of beer poured into a pot in the ground at the grave of a dead chief. The village headman made similar offerings to the spirit of his dead predecessor. The spirits of the dead Nyanja chiefs, ousted by the Yao invasion, were regarded as still powerful in the homeland of their people. For instance, Kangombo, whose shrine was on Mount Soche, used to be appealed to for rain, and on the principle that the most appropriate mediator between a dead man and the living is a descendant of the former, the Yao chief, Kapeni, when he wished to propitiate

[1] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. 177-9; Swann, n. 1913, p. 180.
[2] Codrington, 1898, p. 328; see also Hopkins, J., 1834.
[3] Young, T. C., n. 1932, p. 37.
[4] Watson, 1908, p. 170; Swann, n. 1910, p. 311.
[5] Hetherwick, n. 1913, p. 121.
[6] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 63.

1: Tew . E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

Kangomba, used to persuade Nyanja to help in the sacrificial rite. When Kaponi in turn fled to Mount Soche from the Ngoni, and died there, the Yao addressed their offerings to him, not to Kangomba.[1] The word *Mulungu* has sometimes been interpreted to mean Supreme Being, God, Creator, but among the Yao it seems not to have a personal connotation. It was used to describe the agent in any mysterious event,[2] or the place where the ancestor spirits (*mazuka*) were supposed to dwell. Daily life was full of acts of respect towards the ancestors, who were regarded as jealous of the living, and requiring constant propitiation.[3]

Sorcery

Accusations of witchcraft and measures for dealing with it play a dominant rôle in Yao social life. With certain exceptions nearly all diseases and deaths are thought to be caused by sorcery. The exceptional causes are: the hand of God, old age, the transgression of certain taboos, and battle wounds. If sorcery is suspected the relatives of the sick or dead man consult the *diviner* to identify the *offender*.

Yao (in common with the Maravi and many peoples of Central Africa) believe that sorcerers have a craving for human flesh, which they satisfy by killing with magic the victims of their malice and hatred. They acquire their magical powers by an apprenticeship, which might include incestuous relations with mother, sister, or mother-in-law, or sleeping on the grave of the mother for one night. The sorcerer then learns the medicines and finally demonstrates his power by killing a young relative by magic; he waits till the victim is buried, and then magically exhumes him for the secret feast with his fellow sorcerers. Each sorcerer who shares the flesh owes a debt to the one who secured the victim.

Charms are used as preventive measures against sorcery. When a *diviner* has diagnosed the cause of death as sorcery, retaliatory measures are taken. The headmen of the village could either call in the *witchfinder* to identify the *offender* or he could call in the *diviner* to take action against all the sorcerers in the village. After the *diviner*, *Mabwabile*, had revealed the guilty ones, they were challenged to take the poison ordeal to prove their innocence. If they died, the *proof* and the *punishment* were *simultaneously* accomplished. If they survived, the *diviner* was held to have been at fault and they were acquitted. The witch doctor was supposed to entice sorcerers to the *graveside*, and slay them with magic more powerful than their own.

The *diviner's* findings are to-day checked by the poison ordeal administered to a chicken. A sorcerer detected in this way might be asked to *provide* medicine for the man whose sickness he had caused, or after a death he might be compelled to pay compensation. If the accused is a village headman, he will not be summoned before a *chief*, but his brother will take the villagers away *from the sphere of his influence*, or he may be chased away from the district. Accusations of sorcery follow certain regular lines. Nearly all accusations fall on relatives. Diviners are consulted by matrilineal relatives of the sick or dead person, and the man most usually accused is the brother of the accuser, or the husband of his sister. Witchcraft is therefore a manner of expressing the hostilities latent in these relations, which are, in the Yao social system, full of tensions.

[1] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 311. [2] Hetherwick, p. 1901.
[3] Hastings, 1915, pp. 14-15; Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. 58-59, 104-15.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

Birth

Birth takes place in the bush, some distance from the hamlet, in the presence of female relatives of the woman and of her husband. If the child is stillborn, or miscarried, it is buried in the bush. The husband and wife must abstain from sexual intercourse for some months, until a special ritual intercourse is performed. A man who breaks this taboo is liable to contract a fatal disease, *kwonaga*. Difficult births are attributed to: (*a*) a curse spoken by a matrilineal relative—this is made effective by the intervention of the ancestors, and to remove it it is necessary to perform a rite making clear that no malice is borne; (*b*) the adultery of the woman or her husband, in which case confession will save the woman from dying; and (*c*) sorcery.

If a child is born alive it is brought to the hut of the mother or one of her female relatives, where it is secluded until its naming ceremony, about six days later. Only after the naming is the child considered to be a member of society. A second child should not be born while the first is still suckling, i.e. for about two years. When the child is about four or five months old it is ritually immunized against the dangers of sexual activity, and the parents may resume relations. Elaborate magical precautions are taken to ensure the child's survival. Children sleep with their mother, the boys until they are old enough to go to the boys' dormitory, and the girls until marriage.[1]

Initiation

The yearly initiation ceremonies, *unyago*, are the principal cultural institution of the Yao. That for the boys, *lupanda*, is the most important, and may only take place under a chief or superior village headman, whereas a girls' initiation ceremony may take place under an ordinary headman. The right to hold a boys' initiation ceremony therefore becomes a mark of status which is jealously disputed.[2] The right is expressed as 'having a *citeko*'. A *citeko* is the small basket in which the special sacrificial flour is carried.

Yao carry out initiation between the ages of seven and eleven, whereas generally in East Africa it is postponed until puberty.[3] In response to requests from the headmen the chief appoints the time and place of the boys' initiation ceremony for a group of villages. It is held at the end of the dry season, before the bush is burned. Each initiate is accompanied by a sponsor, *ahamusi*, who may be a brother, uncle, or friend. Before they set out for the place appointed to be *lupanda*, they all assemble before the chief to be anointed with millet-flour specially prepared by his head wife. The word *lupanda* refers to a forked stick over which the sacrificial flour is poured. This stick is planted at the place of assembly, the *masakasa*. The boys, their sponsors, and the master of ceremonies, *m'mitiva*, are accompanied with dancing as far as *masakasa* by their friends. The next day the initiates go to a spot in the bush, where the circumcision (formerly only an incision) is performed, and remain in the bush school, *ndagala*, for about two months, until the wounds are completely healed. The Yao circumcision rite is said not to have been introduced by the Arabs.[4]

During these weeks the boys are subjected to rigorous discipline and instructed in various skills and tribal lore. They sleep in long dormitory huts, with partitions dividing the boys of different villages from each other. The chief appoints the day for

[1] Warren, 1908, pp. 102-3.
[2] Stannus and Elmslie, 1919, p. 110.
[3] Duff, 1913, p. 310.
[4] Livingstone, 1874, p. 81.

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

return to the *lupanda*, where the initiates are welcomed by their friends. An essential part of the ceremony which takes place at this stage is the exhibition of animal shapes made by the *n'mitiwa*, with mounds of earth outlined in flour. These animal shapes differ from lodge to lodge. On the last night before the return to the village the initiates undergo a ceremonial bathing, each boy being carried to the stream by a woman, who thereafter is addressed as 'elder sister'. Finally, with new names, and freshly oiled and decorated, they march to the chief's village to be redeemed by him from the *n'mitiwa* with gifts of cloth. After initiation it is a deadly insult to call a boy by his child-name. All who pass through initiation together consider themselves bound by mutual obligations of hospitality.[1]

Girls' initiation takes place in three stages. First, there is *ciputo*, the general initiation before puberty, which corresponds to the boys' *lupanda*. It takes place at the same time of year, and though it lasts for less than a week, its conclusion is celebrated at *lupanda* jointly with the conclusion of the boys' initiation. A hut is built in the bush, like the long dormitory of the boys, and four days are spent in dancing and singing. Each girl (aged about eight years) is accompanied by a sponsor, a woman friend who continues to be her mentor during subsequent rites, and who assists in giving the girl instruction in her womanly duties. At the end the girls are bathed and anointed, dressed in new clothes, and each is carried to *lupanda* by her sponsor. Here they prove their skill in dancing and receive gifts from their friends. Ritual defloration follows the *ciputo* initiation.[2] Among Mohammedans, clitoridectomy used to be performed by a woman operator, but, it is said, was discontinued in about 1923 on account of the heavy mortality.[3]

After this first general celebration, first pregnancy and first birth are the occasions of separate rites for each girl. According to some informants there were once two ceremonies connected with pregnancy. One, for the young married man whose wives had not yet conceived, used to take place at the same time as *ciputo*; each man was attended by a woman sponsor not his wife, given good advice, and put through various tests of manhood. Mitchell does not confirm the present existence of this ceremony, but in the old days if a man was betrothed or married to a child going through her *ciputo* he had to accompany her.

The *liniwo* ceremony takes place when a young married woman quickens with child for the first time.[4] The woman, with her sponsor and the married women of the neighbourhood, went out in procession for a ceremony of singing and dancing and instruction to the young couple, followed by a feast. Nowadays no men are allowed to attend *liniwo*. A child born of a woman who had not undergone this rite used to be buried alive; nowadays her anyani ndembo is charged by the chief.

Finally, six days after the first child is born, its naming ceremony forms a last initiation rite for its mother. The husband is formally led into her hut by her sponsor and the married women of the neighbourhood, and the child is taken out for the first time to the accompaniment of feasting and dancing.

Most Yao men and women act as sponsors of initiates at least once, and all parti-

[1] Sources for boys' initiation: Stannus and Davey, 1913; Weston, 1908, pp. 109–6; Stannus, A. 1910, pp. 297–8; Hodnett, 1933, pp. 19 sq.; Johnston, 1897, p. 409; Woods, 1, 1905, p. 360.
[2] Stannus, A. 1910, p. 299. [3] Hodnett, 1, 1910, p. 298.
[4] Hodnett, A. 1910, p. 299; Hodnett, 1933, p. 23, calls it *ulemba* (Sulka).

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

ejuate yearly in the great initiation festival for boys and girls. Consequently as they regret each year the lessons of their own initiation, the ceremonies are the main vehicle of Yao culture.[1]

There are also two Moslem ceremonies:

(i) *Jando*, the boys' Moslem baptism, which takes about seven days, and is usually worked in with *lipanda*;

(ii) *Msondo*, the girls' Moslem baptism, which is the same as *jando*, but usually quite separate from *ciputo*. It is important that the wife of a Moslem should have her wounds so that she knows how to prepare the food properly at Ramadan.

Menstruation and Other Taboos

Menstruation is held to be dangerous. A special mat is used by the women during this time, and is rolled up and kept during the rest of the cycle. The hut is completely replastered after menstruation. Intercourse during menses leads to *diwawa* of the man. Sexual contact is dangerous to persons at certain other periods: during initiation ceremonies, during mourning, and for babies who have not been through the protective rite. The danger is thought to lie in *udobo*, a dread disease characterised by swelling. This may be transmitted by salt in the food. Deaths are often attributed to 'salt'. Much of the significance of the mourning is that medicines are prepared which protect the mourners against the dangers attendant on sexual activity.

Burial Rites

News of a death must be sent to the chief by a messenger carrying a single fowl. The chief gives a present of calico for wrapping the body, and a goat for the burial rites. There are called *anake*, neighbours unrelated to the dead, who volunteer for certain duties. They prepare the body for burial and carry it in procession to the graveyard outside the village. No uninitiated person is allowed to see the funeral. All who attend the burial are prohibited from sexual intercourse for one month. After this time the prohibition is lifted by a ceremony of beer drinking and feasting, and on the following day all fires in the village are extinguished, and clean ash, and the mourners are shaved. A new hearth is formed for a final ceremony.

For a period after her husband's death a widow is unclean, and has to be purified by ritual intercourse with a man who is paid. The widow is not allowed to remarry for two or three years. A widower leaves his wife's village, after receiving a parting gift. The widower of ordinary parentage can [illegible]. If a man has himself a 'name child and social position), he has an heir, who inherits also the wives of his predecessor. But if the heir (the successful nephew) has married a cross-cousin (mother's brother's daughter) he would not consider the wife's mother as his inherited wife.

Before the burial the dead man's hut used to be destroyed, together with his possessions. Immediately afterwards a consultation is held as to whether retaliatory action against sorcerers is called for. The *anake*'s duties include not only the conducting of the burial, but also the subsequent inquiry and the conduct of the second ceremony, the beer drinking, at which they share the sorcerers. A man who has

[1] Male ceremonies for girls' initiation (Unclad, [illegible]); Ceremonies, [illegible]; Girls, [illegible]; Mandawali, [illegible]; Women, [illegible]; Initiation, [illegible].

1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

performed these services used to enter a special relationship of privileged familiarity with the village of the dead. This has died out in Nyasaland, but accounts of *Utani*[1] among the Yao at Masasi and Songea suggest that something of the kind is still practised.

Chiefs and headmen are not buried outside the village, as are other persons. They used to be buried before their own huts, but now in the centre of the village. Shrines were raised over their graves, at which offerings of beer and flour were made. If the village was moved the pot of beer sunk into the ground at the chief's grave was also removed and reinstated at the new site. A dead slave was buried by his fellow slaves; normal rights of sepulture were denied to suicides and to persons who had died in taking the poison ordeal (that is, convicted sorcerers).[2]

OTHER DISTINCTIVE CULTURAL FEATURES

The Yao have a tribal mark of two short cuts on each side of the face between the eye and the ear.[3] Their women did not wear the *pelele*, lip-ring, although their neighbours the Makua and Makonde did;[4] the fashion seems to have spread to south Nyasa in the 1880's, as many travellers commented on it, without distinguishing whether the wearers were Yao, Nyanja, or Lomwe.[5] The women used to pierce the left *ala nasi* and insert a metal or lead stud, *cipini*.[6]

MAKUA-LOMWE

TRIBAL AND SUB-TRIBAL GROUPINGS AND DEMOGRAPHY

NOMENCLATURE

The *Ma-* in *Makua* is not a prefix, but part of the name. Variant spellings are *Makwa*, *Makoa*, *Mahoana*. They are sometimes referred to by the name of one subdivision, the *Meeto* Makua, and called *Ameeto* or *Meeto*.[7]

The *Lomwe* (also spelt *Lomwi*) are called *Alolo* by the Yao, and are also frequently called *Angoni* (*Ngoni*) which is an old name for the people of the region.[8] Any of the Makua-Lomwe peoples who have migrated into south Nyasaland are collectively termed *Ngoni* in official reports; *Ngoni* is a hill in the region of Portuguese East Africa, whence they came, but they should not be confused with the Ngoni of Tanganyika.[9] Another name for them is *Acilowe*.[10] *Alolo* is incorrectly applied to all the Lomwe; it has a stricter application to the Cuabo from Quilimane.

[1] Rattray, 1927; Mauny, 1951; Spire, 1953.

[2] Main sources for burial are: Johnston, J., 1922, pp. 58–59; Stannus, A., 1922, pp. 240–4; Abdallah, 1919, pp. 19–21; Duff, 1909, pp. 320–1; Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. 229–32.

[3] Mauny, 1951, p. 153.

[4] Thompson, 1880, pp. 57–8, writing of the Yao of the Ruvuma valley.

[5] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, pp. 16–17; 'around Blantyre hardly any woman is without it'.

[6] Stannus, A., 1922, p. 326.

[7] *Handbook of Portuguese Nyasaland*, 1921, p. 30; Mauny, 1951, p. 56; Weule, K., 1909, p. 159; Livingstone, 1874, p. 32.

[8] Thiel, 1899, pp. 213–17; Gaspar Bocarro passed through Mangoche country. Burton, 1873 (Lacerda's journey, 1798), mentions Mangoche.

[9] Abraham, 1951, p. 13; Mauny, 1951, p. 56.

[10] Johnston, W. P., c. 1899.